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FIELD ADVISORY SERVICES

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New Branch Chief - Rita Barnum has joined FAS as Chief, Classification and Pay Branch. Rita was recruited from the Defense Contract Management Agency where she had Headquarters staff responsibility for policy in classification, pay, hours of work, and overseas allowances. She has extensive experience as a specialist in these program areas and in personnel management evaluation as a member of the Defense Logistics Agency Headquarters staff. Rita spent two years on the U.S. Army Europe staff in program evaluation, and began her career with the Office of Personnel Management, Chicago Region, as a classification appeals adjudicator. Please join us in welcoming Rita to the FAS family.

As usual, new information abounds in the Human Resources community. We have included a great deal of new information in this edition of FASTRACK. Please forward comments or additional information requests to fastalk@cpms.osd.mil.



BENEFITS & ENTITLEMENTS

benefits@cpms.osd.mil

FAS Tool CD-ROM March 2001 (Version 4.0) Available

Version 4.0 (March 2001) FAS Tool CD-ROM is available. One copy will be mailed per location (Department of Defense Human Resources Offices). Material on the CD includes: FAS Handbook CSRS & FERS, Civilian Personnel Manual (CPM), training material, salary tables, and much more. To receive a separate copy, email your name, complete mailing address, commercial and Defense Switched Network (DSN) phone numbers to fastools@cpms.osd.mil.

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Clearinghouse

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) signed a contract with the National Finance Center (NFC) to design, build, and operate an electronic, centrally located operation to reconcile FEHB Program enrollments.

OPM requires the quarterly reconciliation of carrier enrollment records with agency personnel and payroll records. Under the current process, payroll offices generate quarterly reports that are submitted to the FEHB carriers. The carriers must compare the enrollment information on the payroll report to their own enrollment information. If they do not match, the carrier contacts the employing office for documentation to resolve the discrepancy. If the carrier cannot reconcile its records or does not receive the

requested information, it may disenroll the individual.

The FEHB carriers and payroll offices will submit enrollment data to the NFC Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse will reconcile the two sets of data and generate reports of discrepancies with the probable corrective action. Personnel and payroll offices will retrieve these corrective actions files from the OPM Data Hub. The reconciliation and correction of these actions will be markedly improved through this process.

Thrift Investment Board Amends Error Correction Rules

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board issued a final rule clarifying the time limit that employees have to submit claims for correction of errors in their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) accounts. The new rule states that if an agency makes an error in submitting contributions or loan repayments to an employee's account, the employee has six months to submit an error claim, unless the error was a result of an erroneous retirement coverage. If the Board or TSP record keeper makes an error in how the employee's money is invested among the five investment funds, or how the money is shifted among the funds due to an interfund transfer request, the employee has 30 days from the receipt of a participant statement that reflects the first occurrence of the error to submit an error claim. Beginning May 1st, employees will make changes in the way their current contributions are allocated directly with the TSP, rather than through the agency.

FEHB Effective Date Change

OPM is in the process of finalizing regulations that will make January 1 the effective date for all open season enrollments and changes in enrollment. This change will apply to employees, annuitants (including individuals receiving monthly compensation payments from the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP)), former spouses who have coverage under the spouse equity provisions of FEHB law, and individuals enrolled under the Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) provisions of FEHB law. The November 2001 FEHB open season enrollments and changes to enrollment will be effective January 1, 2002. Benefits Administration Letter 01-209, dated April 19, 2001 provides complete information on this issue. You can access this BAL through OPM's website, <http://www.opm.gov/asd/htm/bal01.htm>

No Change in Option B Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Rates

OPM stated, in regulations published April 27, 1999, that they would review the need for new Option B age bands and withholding rates for calendar year 2001. This review was considered necessary due to the change that permitted retirees to continue unreduced Option B coverage beyond age 65. After making this review, OPM announced no changes to the FEGLI Option B withholding rates this year. (See [Benefits Administration Letter 01-314](#) for further information.)

Uniformed Services Participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

Public Law 106-398, enacted October 30, 2000, extended TSP participation to members of the uniformed services. Because the contribution rules are different for uniformed services members, the TSP record keeper must maintain separate databases for civilian and uniformed service participants' accounts. Consequently, participants who are both Federal civilian employees and uniformed services members (e.g., reservist/technicians) will have two separate accounts.

For recordkeeping purposes, the two accounts will be treated separately. For example, if an employee with two accounts wants to move money among investment funds, the employee must submit two interfund transfer requests, one for each account. However, the accounts will be combined for Internal Revenue Code elective deferral limits and for determining the amount an employee may borrow.

In 2002, members may contribute up to 7 percent of basic pay earned each month. If the member is contributing from basic pay, he or she may also contribute all or a whole percentage of any special or incentive pay (including reenlistment or other bonuses) received. However, the total amount contributed each year cannot exceed the Internal Revenue Code elective deferral limit (\$10,500 for 2001). As noted above, for members of the Ready Reserve or National Guard who also have civilian TSP accounts, the total of all contributions to all plans cannot exceed the elective deferral limit.

In addition, military member contributions are subject to Internal Revenue Code section (26 U.S.C. § 415(c)) which limits contributions to

the TSP and other qualified plans to \$35,000, or 25 percent of the uniformed services compensation, whichever is less. If the individual is a reservist and a Federal civilian employee, the 25 percent limitation applies to combined reservist and civilian compensation.

Members will be able to enroll in the TSP during a special 60-day open season, October 9, 2001 to December 8, 2001. Elected TSP contributions will be deducted from paychecks the first week of January 2002.

Retirement Systems and Benefits Program Training

We are developing the Retirement Systems and Benefits Program training schedule for 2002. The course, designed for new human resources professionals or those in need of a refresher, provides basic instruction in retirement coverage, retirement benefits, health and life insurance, Social Security, and Thrift Savings Program. The recommended minimum size for the class is 15. For more information, contact Pete DeLosh at (703) 696-1468.

A new course, Advanced Benefits Workshop for Human Resources Professionals, is scheduled for use by October 2001. The course allows the host to design their own training using these modules:

- Creditable service to include direct and indirect hires, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), etc.;
- Advanced retirement coverage using unusual work histories;
- Work life issues concentrating on events throughout the life of an employee;
- Reemployed annuitants and the effects on retirement and benefit programs;

- Retirement computation to include part-time and special retirement; and
- Special retirement provisions.

Extensive use of exercises and discussion enhance the course. Participants must first have the basic Retirement Systems and Benefits Program Seminar or equivalent for this advanced training. If you are interested, call Syrena West at (703) 696-6301, extension 271, for more information.

Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Corrections Act (FERCCA)

Implementation procedures published in the Federal Register on March 19, 2001, provide rules for correcting errors in retirement coverage for some Federal employees. There are three stages in the implementing strategy: identification, universal assistance, and individualized assistance. Components must enter the names of those employees affected in the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) database. Employees should be referred to the OPM web site (<http://www.opm.gov/benefits>) for information on FERCCA and the provisions of the law. The last step, individualized assistance, provided by an OPM contracted service, starts in June. This service will begin with affected retirees and survivors, then it will address employee issues.

Retirement Systems Modernization

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is leading an effort, which began several years ago, to "modernize" the retirement program to meet long-term customer service, financial management, and business goals. This

tremendous modernization effort includes re-engineering the processes that support and provide services to retirement program participants, which include Federal employees, survivors, and retirees. We are beginning to see results. For example, each retiree receives a “Benefits Booklet” that is personalized to them, providing annuity information such as annual/monthly annuity amounts, survivor annuity benefits for a surviving spouse and children, FEHB and FEGLI coverage, to name a few.

OPM is now using the automated FERS retirement calculator and is developing a coverage determination application (CDA), which is a web-based tool to determine the correct retirement coverage. The Department of Defense (DoD) agreed to pilot the tool before it is released government-wide. OPM is also working with DoD and the United States Post Office to pilot a data exchange gateway. This is the first step in electronically transferring data to OPM. To keep current, check the OPM web site for the “Modernizing Today” newsletter, <http://www.opm.gov/retire/modern>.

Benefits & Entitlements

Has Been Asked.....

A Collection of Questions From the Field

Q. If the agency accommodates an individual because of a disability, would the individual be eligible for a disability retirement?

A. It will depend on how the agency accommodates the employee. The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) addressed accommodation in *Bracey v. OPM*. Bracey was an electronics worker

who suffered injuries resulting in a disability. The agency allowed him to perform light-duty work for years without reassigning him to a vacant position. In addition, the light duties assigned were not in his official position description (electronics worker). Mr. Bracey was affected by RIF and applied for disability retirement. OPM denied the disability retirement citing that the employing agency accommodated his medical condition by providing him with light-duty work within his medical restrictions and the duties were not temporary in nature. MSPB reversed the OPM decision finding that Mr. Bracey was not accommodated because the duties of his light-duty assignment were not those of an electronics worker; therefore, he was eligible for disability retirement. OPM petitioned for review, but the full Board upheld the MSPB decision. The full Board based this decision on the fact that Mr. Bracey performed light-duty assignments that were not the duties of his official position and was not reassigned to a vacant position in the same grade/pay level.

An agency can retain a disabled employee in two ways: 1) assign the employee to an established vacant position at the same grade and pay; or 2) accommodate the employee's disability in a way that enables the employee to perform the duties of his official position.

It is not a reasonable accommodation if an employee is performing light-duty assignments that are not in the official position description. The agency can accommodate the employee by either reassigning the employee into a vacant position within the same grade/pay level, OR by changing the position description,

retaining at least one critical/essential element of the position.

Q. An employee retires from his civilian job while in an active duty military status. He terminated his FEHB coverage the day before entering active duty military. Is the employee eligible to continue his FEHB coverage into retirement?

A. If the employee terminates FEHB prior to entering active duty military, and retires on an immediate annuity without returning to his/her civilian job, the employee may request to have the enrollment reinstated within 60 days after retirement regardless of whether the employee is still on active military duty. If the employee does not request reinstatement, the retirement system will automatically reinstate the enrollment when his military service ends. In addition, the employee must meet the requirements for continuing FEHB coverage as a retiree (e.g., continuously enrolled or covered as a family member for five consecutive years immediately preceding separation, or since first opportunity to enroll.)

Classifier's Corner

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Extension Of Timeline To Implement New Standards

DoD made an exception to its requirement to implement newly released standards within six months of release. The implementation periods for the GS-200 and GS-500 job family standards were extended to two years. This

exception was made due to the workload necessary to implement these standards.

Classification

Has Been Asked.....

A Collection of Questions From the Field

Q. OPM has recently issued job family standards for professional and administrative work in the Accounting and Budget Group, GS-500, and for assistance work in the Human Resources Management Group, GS-200. Will the data in COREDOC be updated to reflect these new standards?

A. The FAS Classification Team is currently reviewing these occupations to assess the impact of the new classification standards. Once all of the necessary changes are made, the CPMS Regionalization and Systems Modernization Division will revise the COREDOC software and make it available to you on our website.

Q. I downloaded the COREDOC Patch 3.1b and installed it per the instructions, but when I start COREDOC the opening screen still shows "Version 3.1a". Did I do something wrong?

A. No. The reason the opening screen still shows version 3.1a is that the 3.1b patch did not change the actual COREDOC software. Rather, it only changed some of the occupational menus.

Q. Is there a formula, similar to that used in the General Schedule Supervisory Guide, for determining the level of nonsupervisory work to be credited in

Factor II, Level of Work Supervised, of the Federal Wage System (FWS) Job Grading Standard for Supervisors?

- A. The FWS Job Grading Standard for Supervisors is used to grade the jobs of supervisors who, as a regular and recurring part of their jobs and on a substantially full-time and continuing basis, exercise technical and administrative supervision over subordinate workers in accomplishing trades and labor work. These supervisory positions have as paramount requirements: (1) experience in and knowledge of trades and labor work, *and* (2) skill and knowledge in supervising subordinate workers. To be evaluated under this standard, jobs must meet or exceed the criteria specified under Situation #1 of Factor I, Nature of Supervisory Responsibility.

To determine the grade level to be credited under Factor II, the user of the FWS Job Grading Standard for Supervisors must identify the occupation(s) directly involved in accomplishing the work assignments and projects that reflect the main purpose or mission of the work for which the supervisor is accountable. In doing this, the user must consider other positions not involved in the primary work of the organization; the purpose of these positions (support, special projects, etc.); and the effect these positions have on the supervisor's responsibility. The user must also consider whether the supervisor is technically knowledgeable in order to provide more than administrative supervision. The key is determining the occupations for which the supervisor is technically accountable and the impact of those positions on the duties and responsibilities of the supervisor. Unlike General Schedule supervisory positions, the

FWS is not concerned with percentages of time. There are no DoD or OPM appeal cases where numbers or workload percentages are used in the analysis of pertinent subordinate positions to arrive at a base level. The FWS Standard for Supervisors anticipates that all pertinent facts relating to the specific case (as discussed above) are considered. There is no formula to apply.

Consequently, sound judgment, combined with a thorough understanding of all job-related data, should be applied to arrive at the appropriate level of nonsupervisory work to be credited in Factor II.

PAY

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Did You Know that two new subchapters were recently added to the Civilian Personnel Manual available on our website? Subchapter 550, Pay Administration (General), and Subchapter 575, Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses; Retention Allowances; and Supervisory Differentials are now available!

These subchapters, and all previously published subchapters, are available at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/cpm/cpm.html>.

Student Loan Repayment Update

The Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-398) amended the student loan repayment provisions under 5 USC 5379. The amendment:

- Removes the limitation to employees covered under General Schedule (GS) pay rates, thus extending coverage to employees in other pay plans (such as the Federal Wage System);
- Broadens the types of loans that qualify under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Public Health Service Act; and
- Requires agencies to report annually to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on their use of this incentive.

OPM published proposed regulations on March 16, 2001, to amend part 537 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Comments were due May 15, 2001. Subsequently, OPM will publish final regulations on the revised student loan repayment program. (See FAS TRACK, Number 2001-1, for more information about this program.)

New OPM Information on the Web

The Office of Personnel Management updated its website with some new fact sheets. “*Credit Hours Under A Flexible Work Schedule*,” “*Military Leave*,” and “*Adjustment Of Work Schedules For Religious Observances*” are some of the new documents available on the OPM Compensation Administration web page. These fact sheets can be found at http://www.opm.gov/oca/worksch/HTML/Credit_hrs.htm, <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/military.htm>, and <http://www.opm.gov/oca/worksch/html/reli.htm>, respectively.

The Compensation Administration web page is at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/index.htm> and contains helpful information on pay administration and policy, leave administration,

salary and wages, and work schedules. It also has “shortcuts” to Federal Register documents, allowances and bonuses information, the 2001 salary tables, and compensation and leave decisions.

Pay Has Been Asked.....

A Collection of Questions From the Field

Q. A carpenter was called to work on a Monday, a Federal holiday, to help repair a building that was damaged in a storm. He worked from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. His normal duty hours are 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Does he receive holiday premium pay or overtime pay for the unscheduled work on the holiday?

A. By definition, a holiday is part of an employee’s regularly scheduled basic workweek. Therefore, if an employee is required to work during the employee’s basic tour of duty on a holiday, the work is considered regularly scheduled, even if the employee is not told that he or she must work during holiday hours until after the administrative workweek begins.

Therefore, if an employee works on a holiday during his regular tour of duty, the employee earns holiday premium pay. If the employee works outside of his regular tour of duty on a holiday, the employee is entitled to overtime pay for hours of work in excess of 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a week (or the alternative work schedule basic work requirement), including the holiday hours.

Q. If an agency schedules an employee to attend training during regular working

hours on a holiday, is the employee entitled to holiday premium pay?

- A. An employee is not entitled to holiday premium pay while engaged in training unless the training meets one of the exceptions at 5 CFR 410.402(b).

Staffing Notes

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Implementing Guidance on New Qualifications for DoD GS-1102 Employees

The Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness signed out a policy memorandum on March 21, 2001, providing guidance to DoD Components on the educational requirements for employees in the contracting career field mandated by section 808 of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Public Law 106-398. Section 808 amended 10 U.S.C. § 1724, to establish a new minimum qualification requirement for all new entrants into the GS-1102 occupational series. It is the Department's view that this requirement applies only to new entrants as of October 1, 2000. Therefore, civilian personnel in DoD, who occupied GS-1102 positions on or before September 30, 2000, are excluded from this new requirement. Components are required to use 10 U.S.C. § 1724(d), waiver provisions for new entrants who do not meet the requirements of 10 U.S.C. § 1724, and were hired into the 1102 series between October 1, 2000, and March 21, 2001, the date of the policy memorandum. A copy of the policy memorandum can be found on our website at

www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/staffing/pdf/808%20Policy.pdf.

Delegated Examining & Overseas Staffing

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Staff Assistance Visits (SAVs) To Delegated Examining Units (DEUs)

When the Delegated Examining Oversight Section began operation in March 2000, one of its first tasks was to visit all 36 of the Department's DEUs. These visits are identified as Staff Assistance Visits (SAVs).

The schedule for the first year was announced in June 2000. The purpose of the visit is to provide technical assistance to the DEUs through discussions with staff members, case file reviews, managers interviews, and procedure and practice consultations.

In order to minimize the effect of our SAVs, we work with Component Headquarters and DEU representatives to set the dates for each SAV. The visit team consists of two or three DEU-trained specialists and the visit itself takes three to four days. Whenever possible, we combine our visit with a review scheduled by one of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness regions.

To date, we have conducted or participated in 20 visits and reviews. We have six more currently on our FY 2001 schedule. We plan to visit the balance of the Department DEUs by the end of the next fiscal year.

At several sites, the managers interviewed were quite complimentary about the quality of candidates certified and timely support provided by their DEUs. Many DEUs have established comprehensive local procedures and detailed checklists making the units more effective. We will compile and share some of these practices later this year.

Most DEUs visited need to work on job analysis. OPM requires thorough, well-documented job analysis in DEU case examining files. We look for the same when we visit. Each DEU should review its job analysis files to determine whether the requirements of the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*, 29 CFR 1607, 1978, have been met.

If you have a question about a visit to your DEU or a question about DEU procedures, contact us at deu@cpms.osd.mil.

DEU & Overseas Staffing Has Been Asked...

A Collection of Questions From the Field

Q. The Field Advisory Services (FAS) Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) Oversight Section issued a data call in December asking for copies of quarterly reports which are sent to OPM, and a list of all positions and activities we have authority to examine. Do you want us to continue sending our quarterly reports to your office?

A. Yes. Please email them to deu@cpms.osd.mil.

Q. Where does it say in the Delegated Examining Operations (DEO) Handbook that self-assessments must be performed by non-DEU staff trained in delegated examining?

A. DEU certification training and current certification requirements for personnelists conducting annual audits is covered in the Interagency Delegated Examining Agreement between OPM and DoD. The requirement for agencies to conduct annual reviews of delegated examining operations using non-DEU staff is covered in the DEO Handbook, Section 9.7 A.

Labor Relations/Employee Relations Training Opportunities

LR/ER Training Opportunities are posted on our website at:

<http://www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/labor/labor.htm>

Labor Relations

labor@cpms.osd.mil

Basic Labor Relations Course

Interested in learning about the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute and Traditional versus Interest Based Negotiation Techniques? Join us in our upcoming Basic Labor Relations Course at our Arlington, Virginia office. Don't miss out on the great opportunity offered November 5-9, 2001!

This course offers an opportunity for personnelists and managers to learn about the

pros and cons of Labor-Management Cooperation, Management/Union/Employee Rights, Unfair Labor Practices, and Negotiability Determinations. The course will include a mock negotiation session where participants utilize traditional bargaining techniques. Please note that after classroom hours course work may be required.

The Basic Labor Relations Course is *tuition free*. However, your agency will be responsible for its participant's travel and per diem. Hotels, restaurants and metro-rail are within walking distance of the training site. The class will be limited to 24 participants. Since applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis, **CALL AND RESERVE YOUR SEAT NOW AS SEATS ARE SURE TO GO FAST!** Please call (703) 696-6301 (DSN 426), team 3, and talk to Debra Buford, extension 404, to reserve your seat. Upon receipt of your request, we will confirm your seat and send more information. We look forward to hearing from you.

Regionalization And Systems Modernization

<http://www.cpms.osd.mil/pmo/homepage.htm>

Deployment of the Modern Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Continues Throughout the Department of Defense (DoD)

The Department of Defense is continuing its successful deployment of the world's largest human resources information system, the modern DCPDS. When fully deployed, this system will support more than three-quarters of a million civilian employees worldwide.

The modern DCPDS was successfully deployed in the fall of 1999 to three initial Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E) sites. In October and November 2000, the system was deployed to two more Army regions and three Air Force installations under an expanded OT&E. Based on the success of these sites, the Department has begun full-scale deployment of the modern DCPDS.

Full-scale deployment began with conversion of the Army's Northeast Region, Aberdeen, MD, on March 16, 2001. The Army Northeast Region is the largest Army site to deploy the modern DCPDS. The Northeast Region provides support to approximately 34,000 employees.

The Army's West Region, Ft. Huachuca, AZ, and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Region, Indianapolis, IN, completed deployment of the modern DCPDS on April 13. The Army West Region supports approximately 20,000 employees, and the DFAS Region supports approximately 30,000 employees. Deployment of the Army West Region marked the half-way point for Army conversion to the modern DCPDS.

The modern DCPDS was deployed to the Navy Human Resources Service Center (HRSC) Pacific-EastPac, Honolulu, HI, and the Army National Capital Region (ANCR), Ft. Belvoir, VA, on April 27. The Navy HRSC Pacific-EastPac supports approximately 11,500 employees and Army ANCR supports approximately 20,000 employees.

The modern DCPDS was deployed to the Army South Central Region, Redstone Arsenal, AL, and the Navy East Region, Portsmouth, VA, on

May 25. The Army South Central Region supports approximately 31,000 employee records, and the Navy East Region supports approximately 30,000 employee records.

The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) completed deployment of the modern DCPDS on June 18. DeCA services approximately 17,000 employee records.

Deployment of the modern DCPDS to the Army Southeast Region, Ft. Benning, GA, and the Navy Southwest Region, San Diego, CA, commenced on June 22. The Army Southeast Region supports approximately 30,800 employee records and the Navy Southwest Region supports approximately 34,600 employee records.

The Navy Northeast Region, Philadelphia, PA, began deployment of the modern DCPDS on July 20. The Navy Northeast Region supports approximately 39,000 employee records.

The modern DCPDS is currently providing HR support services to approximately 366,000 DoD employee records (over 50 percent of the DoD civilian workforce).

The Department will continue to deploy the modern DCPDS with all remaining DoD sites scheduled for deployment this calendar year.

Cpms Employment CORNER

CPMS job vacancies are posted on the Human Resources Operations Center (HROC) job opportunities web site at <http://www.hroc.dla.mil/joas> and on the OPM jobs bulletin board at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>.



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